

Balloons

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12 December 1958

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Progress Report Briefing on [] Meteorological and Power Balloon Study

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1. On 11 December the undersigned attended a briefing in 1803 Tempo 3 Building that was given under the auspices of [] and concerned the progress of [] engineers on their contract for a special meteorological study. The briefing was attended by Mr. [] project engineer, and representatives of []

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2. This study is directed toward the establishment of probabilities for floating a free balloon from various launching sites into the Soviet Union for a specific intelligence gathering mission. The probability is established by the evaluation of meteorological data. The study also determines how these probabilities are enhanced if a powered balloon could be used. The performance of the powered balloon is based on the results of previous studies partially sponsored by TSS/ED. The study is sponsored by [] lending assistance. The Navy recognizes the unpopularity of ballooning for intelligence purposes largely due to a recent operation that failed. The details of this operation appear to be known to the Navy but are unknown to the undersigned. The opinion was expressed at this meeting that the balloon or powered balloon would be used if it proved to be the most likely prospect for accomplishing this intelligence mission.

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3. Some discussion was held concerning the problem of vulnerability of the balloon or powered balloon to detection and destruction. Atti-

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4. An example of the preliminary results of the study is as follows: from Launching site A to target in the winter time with a free balloon, 10 to 40% probability of success. In the summer time, zero probability. With a powered balloon on the same mission in the winter time, 80-90%; in the summer time, 10-40%.

5. A formal presentation [] of the results of this study is scheduled for some time in January.

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File: Powered Balloon

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